

# THE MAGIC OF ORLANDO, HDI-STYLE:

## CELEBRATING SERVICE AND SUPPORT AWARD WINNERS AT HDI 2012

This year, as always, the presentation of HDI's industry awards was a highlight of the general sessions at the annual conference in Orlando.

### **Ron Muns Lifetime Achievement: George Spalding** Executive Vice President, Pink Elephant



The Ron Muns Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes and honors an industry luminary who has significantly impacted the support industry through leadership, knowledge of people, process, and technology, and service to the support community. George Spalding meets all of those criteria and then some. He has spent the past thirty years building a reputation that is larger than life, helping individuals from around the world (in thirty countries on five continents) realize their full potential by simplifying complex topics and inspiring people to acquire new skills.

Before he joined the IT support world, he was a member of the faculty at Yale University, where he spent several years as a consultant to the White House on technical presentations and conferences. He has also coordinated a number of presentations for members of the president's Cabinet, the Smithsonian Institution, and the FBI.

Most of us know George as the King of All Things ITIL and one of the authors of ITIL v3. He was also a member of the first HDI Strategic Advisory Board, where he served with distinction during its formative years, contributing to the definition of the first HDI certification standards and curriculum and serving on the HDI Faculty.

George's commitment to improving the IT service management industry has made him a sought-after speaker throughout the IT world. A self-proclaimed *über-geek*, he has a deep understanding of the nerd side of the industry. In fact, he has trained more than 10,000 IT professionals on the inner workings and profound mysteries of Microsoft Windows, in addition to Novell and Cisco. And his irreverent blend of quick wit and high-tech humor make him a joy to listen to, even when he's making fun of the world he lives in.

George accepted his award with surprise guests in the audience: his children, Tony Porthan and Kelli Porthan, and lifelong friend Terry Sherman. "I'm deeply honored and quite humbled by this award," he said. "What's exciting for me, still, is to see all of you here in Orlando and see how you are hungry for knowledge because you want so desperately to make a difference. I still believe, after all these years, that you can." And we were all happy to hear George say, "Just so you know, this is not the end of my career. I can't afford to retire—I'm in the service and support industry!"

**HDI Analyst of the Year: Tiffany Mills**  
Senior Support Desk Analyst, EmblemHealth  
New York City Local Chapter, Northeast Region



At EmblemHealth, Tiffany Mills is the team lead and senior support center analyst for a team that supports approximately 6,000 users each day, handling password resets, VPN connectivity, printers, wireless, website, BlackBerrys, various application issues, and more. She strongly believes in relieving the customer's stress first and then tackling the issues at hand. "My greatest passion is making people laugh," Tiffany says. "They can then see that the issue will not only be resolved to their satisfaction, but that we'll both end the call relaxed, relieved, and with a smile on our faces." Tiffany's passion for laughter spills over into her personal life where she writes comedy sketches, performs as a stand-up comedienne, and has directed three shows.

Eric Teplansky, Tiffany's manager, nominated her because of her technical aptitude, her leadership skills, and her constant drive to go above and beyond the demands of the job at hand. Always at the top of both call volume and resolution rate, Tiffany closes 79 percent of her calls, which is more than ten percent higher than the next analyst on the team. When it comes to resolving tickets, Tiffany always goes the extra mile, researching solutions using the knowledge base and the web, or by contacting third-level technicians.

As a key part of her team commitment and value, Tiffany documents all her knowledge, which the team has nicknamed "Tiff Notes," and shares it with the organization. She has been so successful at creating new documentation that she's taken on extra responsibilities as the knowledge base administrator. Her team spirit has also been acknowledged by her peers, whose votes

won her the Customer Service, Biggest Cheerleader, and Miss Congeniality awards for two years running.

In her acceptance speech, Tiffany thanked her mother, who told her twenty years ago, "Be who the hell you are." She took that advice to heart, and for those who aspire to achieve this award, she simply says, "Have passion in everything you do, work hard even when no one is looking, and be who the hell you are, no matter what."

**HDI Desktop Support Technician of the Year:  
Susan Lawrence**

IT IOS DT Support Analyst, Baker Hughes IOS Operations  
Houston Local Chapter, Central Region



This year, HDI added a new award to the program—the HDI Desktop Support Technician of the Year Award—and Susan Lawrence was the first to receive this honor. Since 2004, Susan has been a member of the Baker Hughes IT support team. She has more than fifteen years of experience in the IT industry and is a valued leader to her team of forty-one US-based desktop support technicians. Among other key roles, Susan is the subject matter expert (SME) for the IT Project FAST Team and the remote sales force, and she has her Six Sigma Yellow Belt.

Susan focuses on aligning desktop support's efforts with business goals, individual goals, and team goals, particularly with her work on the quick deployment team, as she understands the impact this team has on desktop support's everyday work. For the remote sales force, Susan has become quite an expert in supporting the handheld devices they use in the field. She troubleshoots database problems, hardware problems,



and any type of connectivity problems. "I know I don't always have all the answers," Susan says, "but with communication, determination, and resourcefulness, I assuredly work to get to the resolution."

Billy Dolmage, the Client Services team lead, nominated Susan because she exemplifies customer service and customer support through innovative thinking, troubleshooting, organization, and technical skills. "Her core competencies consist of integrity, managerial courage, teamwork, communication, problem solving, flexibility, and decision-making skills," Billy says. "When you put all this together you have a top-rated, high-performing individual that goes above and beyond to ensure the highest level of customer service to our organization."

Susan is always willing to lend a hand, share knowledge, and be a vital part to any project team she joins. Recently, she was faced with the challenge of working with tough, negative personalities on a special project. Instead of falling into negativity herself, Susan focused diligently on turning the negative forces positive; in doing so, she saved the project team from dysfunction. She identifies her communication style as one of the keys to her success: "One of the things I do is to try to look at each and every person I come in contact with on a daily basis as more than just a customer, user, or client. I view each one as an individual with a need, and it is my opportunity to be their hero!"

### **HDI Manager of Year: Mike Mercer**

Day Manager, Technical Support Desk and Desktop Support, Southwest Airlines  
Dallas/Ft. Worth Local Chapter, Central Region

Mike Mercer's tenure with Southwest Airlines began in 1975, when he joined the team as a reservations agent. His commitment and dedication to the company has resulted in a series of promotions that chronicle a thirty-six-year career. His customer focus as a reservations agent led to a promotion to manager of the Dallas reservations center, where he spent ten years. His passion for computers and electronics took him to the electronic maintenance department as a field services technician, a role which led him to the central support desk manager role. Finally, his love of technology support ultimately led him to his current role as the day manager for the technical support desk and desktop support, where he manages fifty first- and second-level support professionals.

Mike is a strong advocate of performance and measurements, setting goals and maintaining a low cost structure. He is responsible for ensuring that each first-level technician offers exceptional customer service while achieving an abandon rate of less than five percent, a first call resolution rate of 80 percent, and an average speed of answer of less than 25 seconds in a 24x7 environment. His responsibilities for the second-level desktop support team includes successful packaging and deployment of software applications, achieving the three-day SLA of processing ID requests, and handling the more complex issues that cannot be resolved by first-level support. His primary focus today is guiding the integration of the AirTran technical support desk with Southwest's technical support desk.

Mike is often characterized by his colleagues as the true spirit of Southwest Airlines and a leader of good character who knows how to grow his team, drive change in the organization, and set clear expectations. "Mike's years of call center experience made him the perfect person to grow and develop the help desk into the phenomenal central support desk it is today," says Regina Jordan, the evening manager who nominated Mike for this award. "He has helped rebuild and shape the reputation of the support desk, while redefining our mission and purpose to our internal customers."

Mike encourages everyone who would like to earn this professional award to keep striving in the face of obstacles and to always look for continuous improvement opportunities. "Don't get complacent," he advises. "The technology and support business are changing yearly, and it will pass you up if you get complacent. Stay in tune with the technology and look for continuous improvement."



## TEAM EXCELLENCE AWARD – INTERNAL SUPPORT

### PepsiCo Support Center



The PepsiCo Support Center (PSC) mission is “to provide world class technical support for all deployed technologies and applications to all divisions of PepsiCo. We combine technical expertise, quality customer service, highly skilled staff, efficiency, and consistency in managing incidents to ensure that PepsiCo can make, move, and sell product.” Among other things, the team achieves its mission for efficiency and consistency by using the ITIL framework. “Our environment is more stable due to the discipline that ITIL has brought to our incident, problem, and change processes,” says Elaine Smith, PSC senior manager. ITIL processes enable the organization to identify call volume trends as they relate to changes in the operating environment. The problem management team then determines the root cause for recurring issues through data analysis and trend monitoring.

The PSC serves a customer base of 96,000 PepsiCo employees in North America, supporting more than 700 proprietary and commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) applications, and over 200 distinct infrastructure components that perform various business functions. The PSC receives approximately 571,000 calls each year and maintains a 91 percent live-call answer rate. Analysts answer 80 percent of the calls within 120 seconds, and maintain a 76.8 percent first contact resolution rate by leveraging administrative rights in the environment, keeping the knowledge base up to date, using the latest in remote-control software, and ensuring that all staff members have sufficient technical expertise. “Given the variety of experience of our customer base and the complexity of the deployed technologies covering all business functions, the

PSC does an incredible job of delivering quality support to our customers,” says Janet Pittman, PSC director.

The group attributes much of its success to the people and the culture, and enjoys a highly tenured staff, with an average of nine years among the help desk analysts. “We have knowledge and experience, a focus on customer service, and an awesome leadership team,” Janet says. PepsiCo offers a variety of programs that contribute to this record. Among the offerings are My Possibilities, a career management solution that supports career growth; empowerment committees; a diverse reward and recognition program; organizational health surveys; and the Fun Committee. “An integral part of creating teamwork is empowering analysts to participate in committees that make decisions that directly affect them,” explains Janet. For example, analysts schedule meetings, discuss process improvement ideas, and then implement those improvements.

PepsiCo encourages personal and professional development and actively supports the team’s involvement in the HDI Dallas/Ft. Worth local chapter. Jo Ann Ream, PSC help desk manager and vice president of special events for the chapter, encourages everyone to get involved with HDI. “You get the best ideas from other companies; so leverage the HDI organization to find out the latest in training and innovation,” says Jo Ann. “Anytime you can integrate your professional development with where the industry is going, you raise yourself and your organization to the next level.”

## TEAM EXCELLENCE AWARD – EXTERNAL SUPPORT

### Eze Castle Integration



Eze Castle Integration provides technology, IT services, and consulting in the hedge fund and alternative investment industries, servicing more than 600 investment firm clients. With over 350 employees located in twelve offices across the United States, Europe, and Asia, Eze Castle offers a broad portfolio of technology and IT services, including infrastructure design and management, telecommunications, business continuity planning and disaster recovery, archiving, storage, and Internet services. This portfolio is complemented by a service organization that delivers outsourced IT support, including a 24x7x365 help desk, project and technology management services, and consulting services.

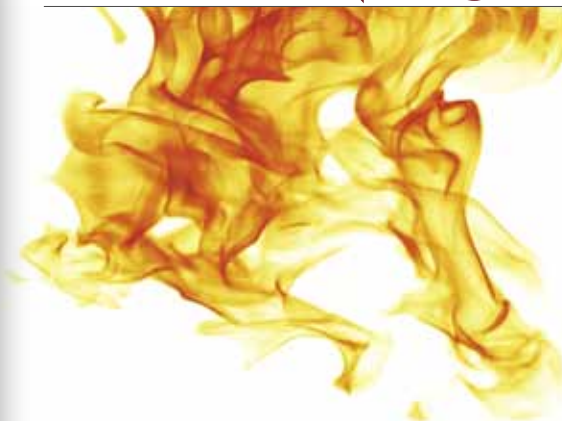
The company strives to provide its clients with the highest quality in state-of-the-art technology, but also recognizes that its solutions are only as valuable as the accompanying service and support they deliver. "We understand that technology is not infallible—unforeseen questions and issues will undoubtedly arise," says Bob Guilbert, managing director of the Boston office. "These issues need immediate attention to keep a firm up and running at full capacity, especially for clients operating in the fast-paced financial markets." The forty-member help desk team, an extremely knowledgeable and experienced group, handles an average of 3,400 calls and processes about 3,800 tickets each month.

"Our help desk team ensures that each client issue is given priority and resolved in a timely manner," says Vinod Paul, managing director of the New York office. These efforts are supported by clearly defined service level agreements and key performance metrics. Help desk team members also leverage Eze Castle's centralized knowledge base for best practice-based solutions to client issues, as well as a number of other internal information sources that are available for them to use in resolving challenging client queries.

Eze Castle's help desk management philosophy is focused on growing employees technically and professionally, while providing the highest quality of client support. This high-priority focus is achieved through a variety of feedback mechanisms, including maintaining open lines of communication between team members and management, and fostering an environment that encourages healthy, friendly competition. The working environment, an open floor plan equipped with state-of-the-art tools, was designed with teamwork, knowledge sharing, and continuous technical and professional development in mind.

The Eze Castle team followed a three-year path to this award. "This is our third nomination process, and we set it as our goal to win this award," Vinod explains. "We worked together as a team, listened closely to the feedback we received from the judges each year, and applied what we learned to our continuous improvement efforts." The dedication and hard work paid off, and next year the Eze Castle banner will fly in the general session room, together with all of the award-winning teams that came before.

# HOT LINKS



## HDI 2012 Flash Mob

Check out the video of HDI's first-ever conference flash mob, sponsored by ManageEngine.

[youtu.be/wRL65FFOKVo](http://youtu.be/wRL65FFOKVo)

## HDI 2012: A Digital Experience

If you couldn't attend the digital event, no worries! The webinars and resources will be available on-demand through the end of July.

[www.ThinkHDI.com/MayDigitalEvent](http://www.ThinkHDI.com/MayDigitalEvent)

## HDI Buyer's Guide

Share your comments, feedback, and ratings on the products featured in this new online tool.

[www.HDIConnect.com/Buyers-Guide](http://www.HDIConnect.com/Buyers-Guide)

## 2012 HDI Support Center Practices & Salary Survey

Open the doors of success and see how your support center measures up. All survey participants receive a free copy of the final report. Also, take the 2012 survey by July 12 and you will be entered to win \$300 toward travel to anywhere Delta Airlines flies!

[www.ThinkHDI.com/The2012Survey](http://www.ThinkHDI.com/The2012Survey)

## Upcoming Webinars

July 17

Purposeful Support Practices

*Presented by Pete McGarahan*

August 21

Career Skills for Rising Support Managers

*Presented by Rae Ann Bruno*

[www.ThinkHDI.com/Webinars](http://www.ThinkHDI.com/Webinars)